

The drug problem in america today



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This essay will be as a conveyor of America's current drug problem and the paraphrasing

of studies undertook by credible sources which revolve around the issue and to showcase the

extent and true depth in how prevalent drugs are in the modern times for America ranging from

the importation of substances, the synthetic opioid epidemic, and the rising numbers in overdose

rates in the last five years.

The Main Factors at Play

The rates in which American's are dying of overdoses are steadily increasing to the point

of being categorized as a national crisis, with the amount of 42, 000 Americans dying from

overdoses in 2016 alone. (Claire Felter “ The U. S. opioid epidemic” 2) With an ever changing

society overdoses deaths are increasing with a rate that is triple of what is was in 2002 from

1. 0% a person per 1000 to a 2. 0% per 1000 (Christopher M Jones. ” Drug and Alcohol

Dependence” 1) the current research articles state that the main culprits in the rise in drug related

deaths come from a combination of our current healthcare system in using opioids and synthetic

opioids to treat pain coupled with a constant supply of heroin which has risen substantially since

1990 and with the recently added synthetic opioid fentanyl (2) the American drug problem is

over time steadily increasing as the rates of overdose deaths increase as doctors over prescribe

opioids while drug traffickers mix fentanyl into heroin to lower price and increase potency.

(Leslie Cooley Dismukes “ How did we get here? Fentanyl and Heroin trafficking trends” 4)

History of Opioids.

Opioids have been prevalent in societies ever since the cultivation of the poppy plant in 3400 BC by the Sumerians in Mesopotamia. In the late 1700's the British were using opium to get China addicted to open up the Chinese markets to trade for even the British knew of it's addictive qualities. Once we as people were able to extract morphine from the poppy plant in 1803 it became widely used for medical purposes as an analgesic opioid. (5 “ Opioids and the Treatment of Chronic Pain.) The acceptance of using opioids for treating chronic pain was perceived as the best method by medical professionals but was also understood the nature in the longer an opioid is taken for pain the stronger the addiction to the opioid becomes. For most of the 19th century opioids were regarded with precaution and having strict national and international regulations place onto opioids in medicine and its overall distribution. (5) It was not until the 1990's when things started to switch to an increasing usage of opioids for pain management and it was due to an increasing demand from the non-medical usage side of pain killers the numbers of first time opioid drug abusers rising from 628, 000 in 1990 to 2. 4 million in 2004 that gave a spike in the overall overdose death statistics. (5) An increase of 120 percent in the span of 14 years, peaking the interest of law enforcement and health agencies to labeling such as an drug epidemic.

Regions affected.

The major impact of damage done to America from illicit drugs is in the north east of America and the South East from the direct relation to its area to Mexico and Columbia. While North Carolina being at the center of it, with a statistics of 4 of the 25 American cities where opioid abuse epidemic is the worst from the use of fentanyl and prescription painkillers such as oxytocin and hydrocodone. (4) The external suppliers from Mexico and Columbia traffickers can easily transport to this area with hidden compartment vehicles and the other various transport routes into North Carolina and the South East. It plays into the other regions as well and the deaths from drugs are from misuse and overuse coupled only with an increasing supply from traffickers and internal factors pertaining to the over prescribing from physicians. In the United States 80% of the yearly total of people who overdose are non-Hispanic white Americans with 20% being Non-Hispanic black and Hispanic. (2) The impact to the public health from illicit drugs is the loss of labor work force contribution, foster care intake numbers spike, and increase in HIV, hepatitis C, and various diseases from shared instruments for transmitting the drug into the system.(2)

Combating the Opioid Crisis.

Illicit drug abuse has caught the eyes and attention of the national level taking in funding and new tactics to combat overseas trafficking such as the Merida Initiative which the United States gave Mexico 3 billion dollars to fund counter narcotics and work with China in the labeling of over 100 synthetic illicit drugs as controlled substances and ceasing production of four fentanyl variations to curb the supply into the United States.(2) While also taking efforts to focus on internal affairs such as controlling the overuse of scripts given out and outreach programs to help addicted users to lower the impact of the modern illicit drug crisis in America. The government has been enacting more funding for state grants for purpose of planned rehabilitation and the usage of programs to reduce transmission of diseases by educating on the harms of needles and sharing of instruments. (2) Funding more public programs to educate the general public such as the wellness campaigns for tobacco did to show the dangers of smoking they want to promote programs that teach about synthetic opioids while also providing a grounded foundation to lay a framework down for prevention. To educate the public more on synthetic and natural opioids and the addiction associated with them. States have taken to asking for funding from the national level to help curb their drug issues with money for local law enforcements. Law enforcements want to create partnerships with communities and nonprofit groups to help take down the issues and provide a support system for the community. (4)

Economic cost of the crisis.

The true cost of the illicit drug crisis is estimated to be around \$50, 779 per user(1) and with a total cost of 33. 1 billion for the entirety of the heroin disorder in America, that does not include painkillers and synthetic opioids. (1) From the incarceration, housing, and, feeding coupled with treatment plans and rehab bring a huge cost to society. With a projected path if the numbers keep increasing at the rate they do now for heroin users and studied growth seen over the past three years the projected numbers of total cost are to be of 51. 2 billion dollars (1) and with the overdose rates rising as well the study accounts for the cost of lost labor for the user if they have died between the ages of 18-25.(1) Most of the numbers to determine cost derive from lost labor and the amount lost during incarceration with attempts to lower drug abuser numbers and to combat the trafficking and supplying of opioids and synthetic opioids in the efforts to lower the overall cost to society for the negative impact that the modern drug problem brings on America. The substantial magnitude of the heroin disorder and the undocumented cost of synthetic opioids cause a great debt to society and bring more awareness to the real dangers addiction poses to America and the public health and the health of our economy.

Scale of the Epidemic

The scale of the epidemic is of a national scale increasing fivefold since the 1990's. while the studies attest to the epidemic of being more deadly than 9/11 and the Iraq Wars combined of U. S. Military troops. (2) While pain was seen as being undertreated medically doctors prescribed more and there was the company manufacturing the opioids pressuring doctors to prescribe with health care providers describing moments of aggressive marketing and told to avoid alternatives to pain management such as acupuncture and physical therapy. (2) Patients would also put on pressure and request opioids over any other form of treatment. Over time the outside supply of drugs from external drug cartels and trafficking and mixing with the internal production and supplying of synthetic opioids the growth rate of first time users becoming addicted jumped in a short time and goes on at the current moment with studies showcases the sharp rise from 2015 with overdose deaths ranging to 33, 091 in 2015 and a year later it was 42, 249 in 2016 with a steady and quick increase from 20102 to 2016.(2 U. S. opioid overdose deaths " CFR Editorial") It has become a national prevalent epidemic with every angle used to try to combat and reduce the problem before it becomes too large to handle. For the development of the modern illicit drug issue did not begin until we have a surplus of opioids for the public to access and use beginning with the legal distribution of pain killers for pain management. (2) Twenty five American cities are hugely affected by the oversupply of easily attainable opioids and creating a multiple of negative factors such as lost labor force, socioeconomic cost, and property crime.(4) If efforts cannot curb the issue at hand it will based on research studies only slowly increase each

following year increasing overall American cost and American overdose deaths.

Conclusion

The current American drug problem is a prevalent widespread one being fed by multiple factors whether they be external or internal. Coming from the three main illicit drugs of heroin, synthetic opioids and natural opioids a range of trafficking from Colombia and Mexico with an over prescribing of over the counter pain killers has led to an increase in socioeconomic cost and the sharp rise in the last five years of overdose deaths and related diseases such as HIV and hepatitis C that come with the association of sharing of syringes and of other instruments to transmit drugs into the system. Today the drug epidemic is seen as a national health crisis and is being combated with state funding, community outreach programs, and tighter regulations on medical scripts. With all the awareness and growing concern over the rising rates studies projected a hopeful outcome if it gets under control of seeing the next few years a decline in first time addicted users and overall drug overdose related deaths pertaining to opioids.

References:

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